

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ACCRA 02340 301146Z
ACTION AF-08

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EO 11652 NA
TAGS: PINT, PINS, EAGR, ECON, GH
SUB: ANNOUNCEMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION CORPS

1. IN NATION- WIDE RADIO AND TV BROADCAST EVENING ON MAR 25,
ACHEAMPONG LAUNCHED, AT LEAST VERBALLY, A NEW ORGANIZATION--
NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION CORPS--WHICH IS TO STIMULATE AGRI-
CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SOP UP 20,000 YOUNG UNEMPLOYED NOW
DRIFTING AROUND GHANA'S CITIES. DETAILS ON HOW THIS IS TO
BE ACCOMPLISHED WERE NOT VOUCHSAFED TO LISTENERS.

2. ACHEAMPONG SAID IDLE YOUTH WOULD BE "ENCOURAGED AND
ATTRACTED" TO RETURN TO COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE THEY WOULD LIVE
IN SELF-SUPPORTING SETTLEMENT GROUPS AND ENGAGE IN FARMING.
HE SAID MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IS HANDING OVER 17 FARMS
TO CORPS FOR A START. CORPS WILL ALSO FISH VOLTA LAKE AND
HELP PROVIDE VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN LIVESTOCK RAISING,
MASONRY, CARPENTRY AND "GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE DIGNITY
OF WORKING WITH THE HAND", ACCORDING TO GHANAIAN TIMES.

3. TIMES TOUCHED EDITORIALLY ON REASONS BEHIND FORMATION OF
CORPS--SAGGING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AGEING FARMERS,
DRIFT OF YOUTH TO CITIES, LACK OF NEW INVESTMENT IN FARMING
AND DISAPPOINTING RETURNS FROM "OPERATION FEED YOURSELF."
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PAPER, ALWAYS A STAUNCH BACKER OF GOVERNMENT'S LATEST EFFORT,
PAINTED CORPS AS "A RENEWED AND FRESH ATTEMPT TO MARSHAL
THE COUNTRY'S HUMAN RESOURCES FOR PRODUCTIVE PURSUITS,"
BUT SEEMED UNABLE TO MUSTER ANY REAL ENTHUSIASM FOR PRO-
JECT.

4. COMMENT: NOTHING WAS HEARD OF CORPS BEFORE ITS ANNOUNCE-

MENT BY ACHEAMPONG AND IT APPEARS THIS IS ANOTHER OF MANY GOG SCHEMES LAUNCHED WITH FANFARE BUT WITHOUT PRIOR PLANNING AND WHICH THEN WITHER FOR LACK OF FOLLOW-UP. WE BELIEVE THIS GOVERNMENT LACKS THE POLITICAL WILL NECESSARY TO SEND PEOPLE BACK TO THE LAND AND KEEP THEM THERE. FORCING YOUTHS TO RETURN TO THE FARM WOULD NOT BE IN KEEPING WITH GHANAIAN NATIONAL CHARACTER. GOG LACKS EXPERTISE NECESSARY TO DEVELOP INCENTIVES WHICH WOULD ENCOURAGE LARGE-SCALE VOLUNTARY MOVEMENT. WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT SOME YOUTHS WILL VOLUNTEER FOR CORPS IF ITS DEBUT IS HIGHLY PUBLICIZED, BUT WE FEEL SURE THAT FEW WILL ACTUALLY MAKE IT TO COUNTRY-SIDE. THOSE THAT DO WILL PROBABLY QUICKLY DRIFT BACK TO CITIES. NET EFFECT ON RURAL AREAS IS LIKELY TO BE MORE DISRUPTIVE THAN PRODUCTIVE. ENTIRE EXERCISE, HOWEVER, SHOWS THAT ACHEAMPONG IS AT LAST GIVING SOME INDICATION HE IS AWARE GHANA IS IN SERIOUS STRAITS AND THAT GOG MUST TAKE SOME ACTION-EVEN IF IT ONLY HAS PR EFFECT.

SMITH

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